

JULY 4, 2015 speech.

Usual salutations.

I would like to thank all present for coming to the American Residence this evening to celebrate with us the 239 times our planet has circled the sun since the day the United State of America declared its independence on July 4, 1776, minus two days. I promise that my discourse will be mercifully brief this time around. Last year I went on at such length that the wind mounted, the sky darkened, and the rain fell. I have learned my lesson.

It is always helpful to learn lessons, especially by looking back to review what has taken place during the past year. In Togo a number of positive things occurred. We witnessed the inauguration of two major projects expanding the capacity of the Autonomous Port of Lome, the economic solar plexus of the country. We watched the new airport terminal as it moved toward completion. New roads and bridges came on line, an important element in enhancing the competitiveness of Togo in the regional economy, and a boon to the Togolese people. There have been less visible elements at work as well, the increasing role of the OTR and, the launch of the single guichet at the port, both commendable efforts to enhance the efficiency and strengthen the integrity of public sector finances.

On the political front, Togolese can be proud of the fact that their country held a presidential election that met the mark for transparency in the eyes of neutral international observers. The people of Togo peacefully selected their

leadership at the ballot box, the sort of positive outcome my government seeks and applauds in this country and in this region. The election represented a step forward toward a more democratic future for this country.

The future, after all, is where we should look. The past becomes history, unchangeable, and while we can draw lessons from it, we are all headed away from it and into the future. Both challenges and possibilities lie ahead, but with foresight and careful planning it is possible to help shape what is to come.

Looking ahead on the economic front, job creation will be key to Togo's future prosperity and stability. More and different jobs will be needed to absorb the bulge of Togolese youth destined to enter the work force each year. Over the longer term, it will be equally important for Togo to follow policies that will shape its demographic profile in order to balance a growing population with available space and resources.

On the social front, there will be the need for enhanced investment in education, technical training and health care, both for urban and rural populations, to help them adapt successfully to the evolving circumstances of the future. There must also be efforts to strengthen the system of justice and promote respect for human rights, the necessary underpinnings of any equitable and functional society.

In the domain of security, the challenges are clear. Extremism emanating from the Sahel will pose a growing challenge to coastal states. The security of maritime routes, not just in Togolese waters, but along the entire Gulf of Guinea,

will be a determinant for sustained economic growth. There will be an important role for Togo in maintaining regional stability. Ongoing upheavals in Mali, Southern Sudan and the Central African Republic highlight the importance of peacekeeping, and the need for Togo to remain active in this area.

Mr. Foreign Minister, Togo has registered significant progress on the political front, but important challenges still wait ahead. Democratic elections are a necessary starting point, but what follows elections will be equally important if this country is to move beyond the political and regional divides of the past. Continued reform will be of paramount importance. I will not list what priority reforms -- all present already know what these are -- but simply note that the essential challenge will be to find viable solutions. This will require all involved to engage in give-and-take negotiation, to accept compromise, and to place the long-term interests of the Togolese people above historical regional divides or short term partisan and personal interests. The political class of Togo bears a heavy responsibility in approaching this process, since the future of this country depends upon the success of their efforts, and history will judge them kindly or harshly for how they handle this challenge. Mali, Burundi and Burkina Faso all provide unfortunate examples of the failure to accept compromise, of the inability of national leaders to work together to find just and consensual solutions to internal differences.

The United States stands beside Togo as this country confronts the challenges of the future. We cherish the close, long-standing bilateral relationship with Togo and the Togolese people, and we are committed to maintaining and

strengthening these ties. We will continue to partner with Togo to achieve the goals of the four pillars upon which the African policy of the United States stands – sustained economic growth, strong democratic governance, preservation of security, and investment in human capital. We will seek to move forward into the future in a partnership with Togo that is based not just upon shared interests, but upon shared principles as well.

In conclusion, I am pleased to announce that a sort of alternance is scheduled here in Lome in the near future. Within a few weeks, my wife Agathe and I will depart to make way for my successor. We leave with fond memories of a warm and welcoming people. There are many things about this lovely country that we will miss, and I can assure you there will always be a place for it and for all of you in our hearts.

Thank you.